

Arsenal marks end of GB campaign

Special to the Arsenal Sentinel

The team at the Pine Bluff Chemical Activity (PBCA) and the Pine Bluff Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (PBCDF) have safely transported and destroyed the last GB nerve-agent filled weapon in its originally declared stockpile.

On May 17, PBCA safely transported the last enhanced onsite container carrying GB rockets to PBCDF, and May 19 the last GB nerve-agent filled chemical weapon was disposed of at PBCDF.

"This is a great day in the history of this project," said Lt. Col. Casey Scott, Pine Bluff Chemical Activity commander. "Our community, our world is a much safer place now that this significant storage risk is gone with the elimination of these weapons."

The inventory of GB-filled weapons that have been safely stored, transported, and disposed of consisted of 90,409 rockets and two ton containers. This equates to approximately 960,000 pounds of GB agent that have been eliminated.

A press conference was held May 22 at the Outreach Office for Chemical Disposal, and was attended by several employees, as well as members of the media. "This is a huge day," said Dale Ormond, acting director of the U.S. Army Chemical Materials Agency (CMA), which is located at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md. "A tremendous milestone for risk reduction. This really is a community accomplishment. I would like to extend my congratulations and thanks."

PBCA transported the first GB rockets from storage March 28, 2005, and PBCDF disposed of its first chemical weapon March 29, 2005. According to Greer, the GB-filled munitions posed the greatest storage risk so that is why they were the first disposal campaign.

"We will progress through our next disposal campaigns with the same commitment to safety as was demonstrated throughout the disposal of the GB nerve agent munitions," said Mark Greer, site project manager for PBCDF. "I am extremely proud of and grateful for all the people who have diligently worked to make this achievement possible."

The next disposal campaign, set to begin this fall, will be the VX-filled rockets, followed by the VX-filled landmines, and finally the HD/HT bulk containers. VX is a nerve agent, and HD/HT are blister agents. In the months preceding the start of the second disposal campaign, PBCDF will be in an outage for maintenance and changeover of the facility equipment.

"The Lord's work is done, day to day, by a group of people who have taken on one of the most challenging missions in our Army, certainly one of the most dangerous. They do it with great skill, with great precision and with great passion," said Col. Brian Lindamood, Arsenal commander, during the press conference.

PBCDF accomplished a safety milestone May 9, when the employees of Washington Group International, the systems contractor hired by the U.S. Army to operate the facility, achieved 9 million work hours without a lost-time injury that resulted in a day away from work.

"We are extremely pleased with the effort put forth by our employees to safely eliminate this component of the stockpile," said David Reber, Washington Group International project general manager. "Each employee can feel a sense of pride for their part in making our community safer."